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Students help revitalize the community of Winsted through the arts

Summary: Thomas Roloff '11, Ian Patterson '12, and Samantha Bruno '13 share talents with a new community arts council.

(August 2, 2011)-Winsted is a small lakeside town in central Minnesota with a big idea for community revitalization. The plan is to revitalize their community and their local economy through the arts. A steady boost in population growth, interest in the arts, and leadership training led to a push for more community arts as an economic force, and the Winsted Arts Council was born. And who better to help them get started than three University of Minnesota, Morris students. Thomas Roloff '11, Pine Springs, an English and American Indian studies major, Ian Patterson '12, Eden Prairie, a political science and chemistry major, and Samantha Bruno '13, Foley, a studio arts major, each brought a different perspective to the recent strategic planning project for the new council.

The three students were tasked with compiling information for a strategic planning workshop for the Arts Council, which they summed up in a substantial report. Roloff, Patterson, and Bruno approached the project with an outsider's objective perspective. A significant consideration for the council is acquiring and then converting three buildings in Winsted into artistic areas: an old creamery into a performance space, dormitory style housing for artists, and storage space.

"Why the arts?" you may be asking. Roloff puts it best. "An arts council is vital to the community," he says. "The community thrives from its presence. It brings diversity and a sense of community."

All three enjoyed the project. Says Patterson, it was an "engaging project to be working on because there was no template we were paving the road."

Bruno's interest in the project was piqued after she worked on a similar project in the city of Wheaton last summer. She says she's interested in "using art to help people solve small town problems."

Roloff, who wants to work on something similar after his graduation after fall semester adds that he enjoyed this project so much because he "likes doing work that provides something beyond a paycheck this is very rewarding."

This project was funded in part by the Southwest Minnesota Arts and Humanities Council. It was facilitated by the [Center for Small Towns, a community outreach program of the University of Minnesota, Morris that serves as a point-of-entry to the resources of the University of Minnesota. Small towns, local units of government, k-12 schools, nonprofit organizations, and other University units are able to utilize CST's resources as they work on rural issues or make contributions to rural society. Its mission is to focus the University's attention and marshal its resources toward assisting Minnesota's small towns with locally identified issues by creating applied learning opportunities for faculty and students.](#)

[Photo: Ian Patterson, Samantha Bruno, Thomas Roloff](#)

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